

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-23 are currently pending. Claims 1-3, 10-12, and 19-22 have been amended; and Claim 23 has been added by the present amendment. The changes and additions to the claims are supported by the originally filed specification and do not add new matter.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1-22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,168,444 to Cukor et al. (hereinafter "the '444 patent") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,910,896 to Hahn-Carlson (hereinafter "the '896 patent").

Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for the interview granted Applicants' representative on November 10, 2005, at which time Claims 1-3 and the teachings of the '896 and '444 patents were discussed. However, no agreement was reached.

Amended Claim 1 is directed to a physical distribution management method, comprising: (1) an image data generation step for generating image data of a plurality of types of documents on which a condition for exporting or importing goods is described; (2) an image data storage step for storing the image data generated in the image data generation step to be associated with the goods; (3) a document data storage step for storing document data described on the document, the document data to be associated with the goods; (4) an identification data storage step for storing identification data that identifies a party concerned with export or import of the goods among, in addition to a consignor and a consignee, a number of parties concerned with export or import of the goods; and (5) a data output step, when the party concerned specifies data relating to goods, for obtaining stored

data of goods to be associated with the corresponding specified data in the stored document data, and for outputting the obtained data. Further, Claim 1 recites that the identification data storage step decides a range of an output enable data to the party concerned based on stored identification data, and the data output step obtains data matching the decided range. Further, Claim 1 has been amended to clarify that the image data storage step determines a type of the generated image data and when the determined type is different from a predetermined type, converts the image data to the predetermined type and stores the converted image data. The changes to Claim 1 are supported by the originally filed specification and do not add new matter.¹

The '444 patent is directed to a system for image processing of documents generated in shipping transactions, the system including remote scanning stations 10 and an image file server 13. The '444 patent discloses that the document images can be captured by scanners at a plurality of remote stations, while the images of the shipping documents can be viewed at a plurality of image processing stations 18. Thus, the system allows for the printing of transaction invoices from the image data in a database along with a hard copy of any shipping document images that are to accompany the invoices. However, Applicants respectfully submit that the '444 patent fails to disclose that the image data storage step determines a type of the generated image data and when the determined type is different from a predetermined type, converts the image data to the predetermined type and stores the converted image data, as recited in amended Claim 1. Rather, the '444 patent merely discloses that shipping transaction documents may be scanned at remote scanning stations, but does not disclose that a determination is made as to the type of image data and if the image data is not of a

¹ See e.g., page 20, line 25 to page 21, line 7 of the specification.

predetermined type, conversion is made to the predetermined type, as recited in amended Claim 1.

The '896 patent is directed to a computer processing system for tracking a shipment transaction involving a shipper and a carrier. As shown in Figure 1, the '896 patent discloses a central processor 40 that receives transaction information from a data processing device 34 associated with the shipper 20. The transaction information, which is listed in Table 1 of the '896 patent, is maintained by the central processor 40, which allows access to the information by the shipper 20 and the carrier 22. However, Applicants respectfully submit that the '896 patent fails to disclose an image data storage step that determines a type of the generated image data, and when the determined type is different from a predetermined type, converts the image data to the predetermined type and stores the converted image data, as recited in amended Claim 1. In this regard, Applicants note that the '896 patent fails to disclose the generation of image data and that the Office Action is not relying on the '896 patent to show storage of image data, but relies on the '444 patent to show the generation and storage of image data.

Thus, no matter how the teachings of the '444 and '896 patents are combined, the combination does not teach or suggest an image data storage step that determines a type of generated image data, and when the determined type is different from a predetermined type, converts the image data to the predetermined type and stores the converted image data, as recited in amended Claim 1. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of Claim 1 (and dependent Claims 2-9) is rendered moot by the present amendment to Claim 1.

Independent Claims 10 and 19-22 recite limitations analogous to the limitations recited in Claim 1. Moreover, Claims 10 and 19-22 have been amended in a manner

analogous to the amendment to Claim 1. Accordingly, for the reasons stated above for the patentability of Claim 1, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of Claims 10 and 19-22 (and all associated dependent claims) are rendered moot by the present amendment to the independent claims.

Amended Claim 2, which depends from Claim 1, recites that the data output step specifies a completed procedure based on date data and outputs data representing the completed procedure. Further, amended Claim 3, which depends from Claim 2, states that the data output step displays a diagram illustrating a correspondence between a person who conducts the specified completed procedure and a person who is a recipient of the procedure, and outputs data representing the specified completed procedure. Applicants respectfully submit that no matter how the teachings of the '444 and '896 patents are combined, the combination does not teach or suggest the limitations recited in dependent Claims 2 and 3 regarding outputting data representing a completed procedure and displaying a diagram illustrating a correspondence between a person who conducts the specified completed procedure and a person who is the recipient of the procedure. As discussed in the interview noted above, the '896 patent fails to disclose the diagram recited in amended Claim 3.

The present amendment also sets forth new Claim 23 for examination on the merits. New Claim 23, which depends from Claim 1, clarifies that the predetermined type is PDF (Portable Document Format). New Claim 23 is supported by the originally filed specification and does not add new matter.²

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that independent Claims 1, 10, and 19-22 (and all associated dependent claims) patentably define over any proper combination of the '444 and '896 patents.

² See, e.g., page 7 of the specification.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment and in light of the above discussion, the outstanding grounds for rejection are believed to have been overcome. The application as amended herewith is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

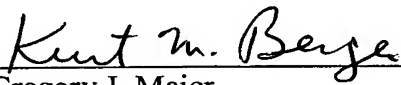
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